

❧ CONCLUSION ❧

To study the philosophy of language is to see that there is progress in philosophy. The idea that the basic meaningful unit of language is the word was superseded by the idea that the basic unit is the sentence, and that was superseded by the twin ideas that the meaning of a sentence makes sense only as it relates to the language as a whole and that linguistic meaning ultimately rests upon people meaning things by their utterances. The idea that language is a discrete entity that can be understood independently of the non-linguistic context was superseded by the idea that language can be understood only in its context, and that idea was superseded by the idea that there is no sharp line to be drawn between linguistic behaviour and non-linguistic behaviour or between linguistic behaviour and the environment in which it occurs. Although there are no final answers, much has been learned in this century about the nature and uses of language, the primary locus of meaning, the nature of interpretation, the relation between language and empirical evidence, and the interrelation between meaning and the cognitive states of speakers.

A. P. Martinich: "Philosophy of language", en J. V. Canfield (ed.) *Routledge History of Philosophy*, Routledge, London, 1997, p. 35